

THE HUMANITARIAN LEAGUE'S PUBLICATIONS.

No. 22.

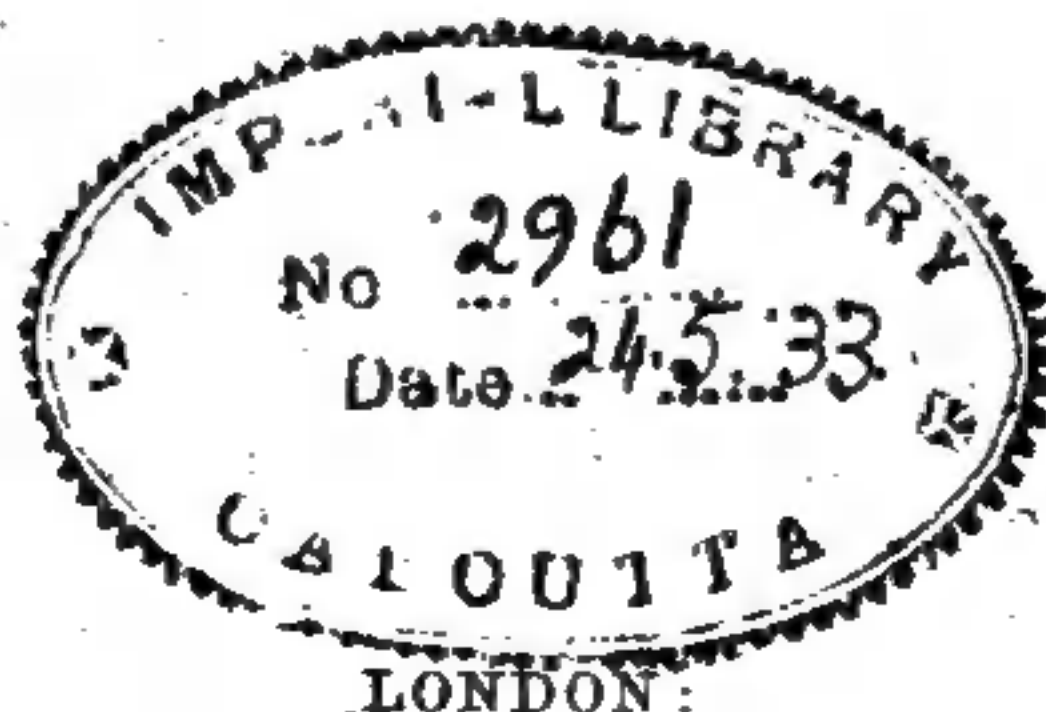
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178.D.1089.

# THE SWEATING SYSTEM.

BY

MAURICE ADAMS.



WILLIAM REEVES, 185, FLEET STREET, E.C.

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LONDON :

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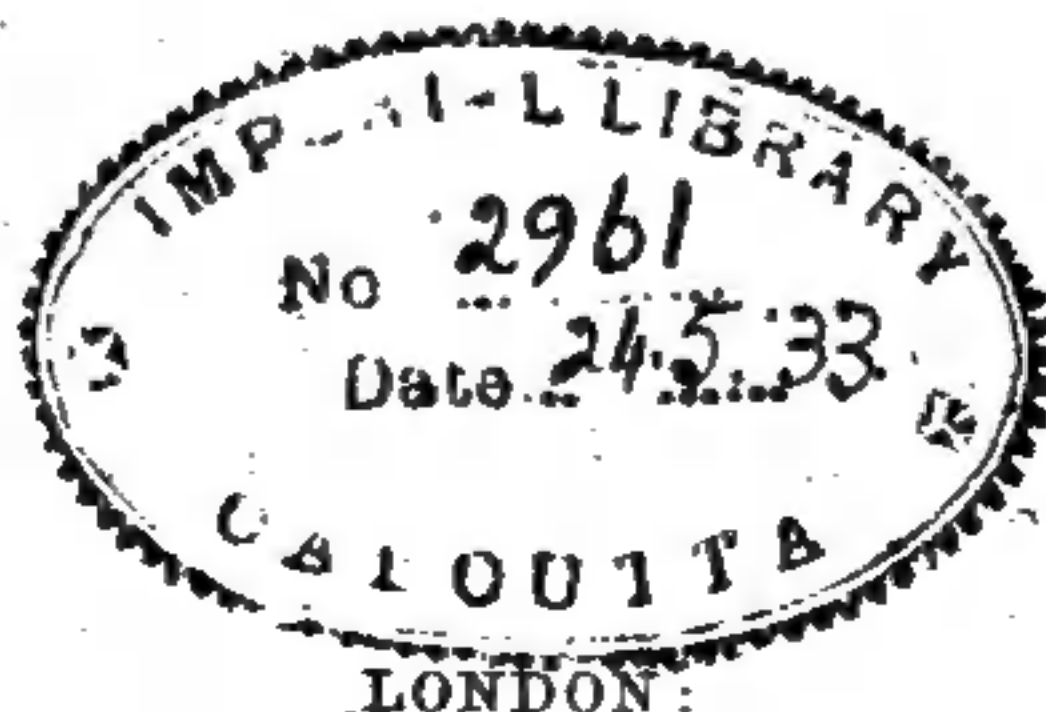
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## THE SWEATING SYSTEM.

### SWEATING IN THE TECHNICAL SENSE.

THE curse which has, hitherto, persistently dogged the footsteps of advancing civilisation is the gross inequality with which its advantages have been shared. Whilst one section of the people have enjoyed the benefits of civilised life with few or none of its drawbacks, another section have been ground down by exhausting toil, amidst hideous and unhealthy surroundings, without sufficient food to sustain them in health, and with no chance whatever of developing their higher faculties, or claiming their share in the spiritual inheritance of the race; in short they have suffered all the privations and miseries of the savage without his open-air life and freedom from continuous toil.

These truths were brought home to the minds of well-to-do people, some years ago, by the shocking revelations about the life of the London poor in the "Bitter Cry of Outcast London." A thrill of horror ran through "society," and it was felt that it was high time to enquire into the truth of the statements made in it, and if they were substantiated, to find a remedy for such terrible evils. A great deal was talked about the "sweating" of the poorer workers, and of the sufferings they endured in consequence; but people were far

it will be well to observe how, in the course of the official and other enquiries into the matter, the word has gradually defined itself. One figure loomed large in the popular imagination of the time—the “sweater”—who by means of his “system” of sub-contracting wrung wealth for himself from the toil of haggard wretches working in indescribably filthy “dens,” for next to impossibly long hours, barely keeping soul and body together with the starvation wages they earned.

It was with some such picture in their minds that the Board of Trade, in 1887, ordered their labour correspondent, Mr. John Burnett, to enquire into “what is known as the Sweating System at the East End of London, especially in the tailoring trade.” In his report to the Board he defined the system as “one under which the sub-contractors undertake to do work in their own houses or small workshops, and employ others to do it, making a profit for themselves by the difference between the contract price and the wages they pay their assistants.” This system he found to prevail throughout the East End. “The smaller sweaters,” he reported, “use part of their dwelling accommodation, and in the vast majority of cases work is carried on under conditions in the highest degree filthy and unsanitary. In small rooms not more than nine or ten feet square, heated by a coke fire for the pressers, and at night lighted by flaming jets of gas, six, eight, ten, and even a dozen workers may be crowded.” These workers have frequently to be in the workshop at 6 a.m. to start working, or to await the arrival of work, and in the busy season have to work right on to midnight with five or ten minutes for dinner, which, said a witness examined by the Lords’ Committee,



working." Tea or coffee supplied by the master is taken cold because, as the same witness explained, "we cannot allow ourselves time to drink warm coffee, because the work does not earn the price, and we must earn so much as to get a living for our families." For this labour the average wage would vary from 10s. or 11s. to 15s. per week. Such is the "sweating system" as described by Mr. Burnett, and in the voluminous "Report and Evidence of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System in 1890."

That this system still flourishes the following well-authenticated case will show. A firm of clerical tailors give out much of their work to a contractor, paying him from 2s. to 3s. 6d. a pair for trousers. These he has made by eight women and two men, in a room with a low ceiling and very bad sanitary arrangements, over a public house, for which he pays 8s. a week. There is a coke fire and several gas jets in the room. The workers, other than the machinist and presser, earn about 8s. or 9s. a week, working from 8 a.m. to 5 or 9 p.m., with an hour for dinner and "tea anyhow." On the labour of these people the sweater lives in comfort. The following extract from the *Daily News* of July 24th, 1896, furnishes even more conclusive evidence of the continued existence of as complete a system of sweating as was revealed by the reports of 1887 or 1890-91.

Judge Emden, sitting at Lambeth County Court yesterday, offered some strong remarks upon the rate of remuneration of tailoresses. His Honour had before him an action in which a clothing manufacturer sued a tailoress to recover 19 kharkee coats, which she was detaining. Plaintiff stated that he took work from wholesale manufacturers, and was now engaged with a large order of special kharkee coats for export to South



did work at home. She was entrusted with 19 of these coats for the purpose of working in them by hand five button-holes and sewing on four buttons. The rate of pay for this was  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per coat, or 9d. per dozen.

Judge Emden (surprised): Ninepence per dozen, or each?

Plaintiff: Ninepence per dozen, and that is the usual rate.

Judge Emden: How long does it take to do a coat?

Defendant: It cannot be done under an hour.

Plaintiff, with some emphasis, informed his honour that he only got  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per coat for cutting, making, button-holing, and pressing. He had to cut things "very fine" himself or he lost on his jobs. Defendant, he added, accepted the work at 9d. per dozen, and in many cases he (plaintiff) was without any profit.

Judge Emden: I suppose you will say next that no one makes a profit.

Plaintiff: I don't but the capitalist does. Proceeding, plaintiff added that he turned out as many as 500 or 600 coats a day.

Judge Emden: I am sorry for the poor people who work for you at the rate you mention. It is said, and said very truly, that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives. This case affords a shocking disclosure of how this woman—and she is only one of a class—has been paid for her labour.

Yet although the sub-contractor figures largely in the popular imagination, and although there is no doubt that he often makes a good living out of the toil of others, the enquiries proved—as Mr. Lakeman, the well-known factory inspector, told the Lords' Committee—that there is sweating without sub-contracting and sub-contracting without sweating. In many cases the contractor works as hard and as long as his hands, and gets little more than they do—in fact is sweated himself—and on the other hand some contractors pay decent wages to their employees and only work them during factory hours.

researches of Mr. Chas. Booth show that "sweating" extends beyond the "Sweating System" and that many people working in their own homes on their own materials, or on those furnished them direct from the manufacturer or dealer, are sweated quite as badly as the occupants of any "sweater's den." This comes out quite clearly in the pathetic case of Mrs. Isabella Killick, trouser finisher, who was examined by the Lords' Committee, and which is one out of several similar cases examined before the same Committee, and typical of many thousands of others. She was a married woman whose husband had been a boiler maker earning good wages, but who was then dying in an infirmary.

"I have three children to support, the eldest ten years of age, the youngest three. I can't earn more than 1s. 2d. a day and I have to find my own materials, altogether I do not clear 1s. a day, not after finding my own trimmings, firing and all. I am up at six in the morning and never done till eight at night. I have to go for my work and take it back again. About three months of the year work is slack. I am then glad to get anything to do, cleaning or washing. I cannot be without work as I have three little ones to support."

"I take it from what you say," she was asked, "that you manage to clear 1s. a day by your work after providing your materials?"—"After the things." "Then there is 2s. for rent?"—"Yes." "And therefore all you have is 5s. really a week to live upon?"—"Yes." "And out of that you have to pay firing and your living?"—"Yes, firing and light." "I get a herring and a cup of tea, that is the chief of my living with the rent to pay and three children eating very hearty. As for meat, I do not expect I get meat once in six months."

In this case there is no sweater grinding down his hands.

pay herself, and yet this is so small that long hours of work barely sustain life in herself and her children.

The enquiry thus changed its character from an enquiry into the "Sweating System" to an enquiry into those industries into which, or into branches of which, sweating enters largely; sweating being defined as labour carried on for *excessively long hours*, for *very low wages*, and *under insanitary conditions*. Such trades were found to be very numerous.

In the lower branches of the Tailoring-trades women were found to be working in slop-shops from 8 a.m. to 10 or 11 p.m., for from a 1s. to 1s. 6d. a day. "The very lowest layer of the coat trade, that work done by women and men at their own houses, really does not pay the contractor to take it out," said Miss Potter. In trouser-finishing women toil, as we have seen, for the whole week for 4s. a week.

The Shirt-trade is another of the sweated industries. Women are paid 2s. 6d. a dozen for making shirts. They with difficulty finish a dozen in a day and a half, giving 7s. 6d. or 8s. for a week of "ceaseless toil." For "making" shirts with 7 button holes, i.e., for all the work except the machining, women are now receiving ½d. each, earning 3d. a day on an average.

Work is done in the Cabinet-making trade by women who buy their own materials, and put their own labour into them, selling the finished article at the end of the week to the dealers for whatever they can get. These women work "all the hours that God gives them," as one of them phrased it, in small and unhealthy workshops, and do not often earn more than from 15s. to 16s. a week.

known in 1890, when [redacted] from the district [redacted] to give evidence before the Lords' Committee. They and the Nail-makers of Halesowen and the neighbourhood are sweated to a degree which it seems impossible to exceed. When women do heavier work than the ordinary blacksmith for hours, which are limited only by their physical endurance, earning thereby 1s. a day or [redacted] less—men earning but 3s., when they work huge hammers called "Olivers," which often require the combined strength of a man and woman to move, and after all their toil are defrauded in the weight of their product, and the quality of the material supplied them, it seems [redacted] if the force of sweating could no further go!

And yet in the matter of wages the women employed in the Nottingham Hosiery-trades are worse off. They can barely earn more than from 3s. to 3s. 6d. a week, so that they are often partly dependent upon parish relief, and "even this wretched wage is often paid in goods from the middleman's shop, just [redacted] if the Truck Act had never been passed."

The earnings in the Lace-trade, in the same district, [redacted] said to be 1½d. an hour or less.

Sweating also prevails in the Cutlery and File-Cutting trades of Sheffield, which are still in the stage of the small master and the domestic workshop.

Long hours are habitually worked in the Dressmaking-trades, and these are always liable to be suddenly lengthened by orders coming in to be executed at short notice. "Weddings and funerals," writes Miss E. March Phillips, "are made occasions for excessive hours. A country dressmaker excused the employment of young



one remembers that these long hours are worked by young girls in close and ill-ventilated rooms, the air in which is rendered still more noxious by gas, and they realise the damage to health which must ensue. "A few days of high pressure will permanently injure a child's health," we were told. In addition to this the wages paid are often very low, beginners and "apprentices" getting little or nothing, so that many girls are either partly supported by their relatives, or supplement their wages by prostitution.

Work in the Fur-trade is generally carried on in small workshops, sub-contracting of the worst kind prevails, and wages are so low, that 4s. a week represents a common wage for women, and men rarely earn more than 12s.

Even the recently developed Bicycle-manufacture is not free from the taint of sweating. Girls employed in tyre-making only get 8s. for working the usual factory hours, so that it may take the whole year's work of one of these women to earn the amount which the fashionable lady spends on her bicycle.

In the Mantle-making, Stick and Umbrella-making, Sack and Rope-making, Envelope-making, Ostrich-Feather making, in the Brush-making, Tinware-trade, and in a number of other minor industries, sweating is rampant. It is in such trades as these, where the work is mostly carried on in houses or small workshops in which good sanitary conditions do not exist, and where, whether under middlemen or "sweaters" or without them, men and women work for wearisome hours for a wage which is insufficient to maintain them in health and strength, that

## SWEATING ■ THE WIDER SENSE.

But there ■ numbers of workers employed in the transport and distributive industries who toil under conditions which fulfil one or more of the requirements of "sweating." Paid well, they may work in "dangerous trades" ■ in unhealthy surroundings, ■ in healthy employments they may be overworked, or may receive excessively low wages, or both abuses may be combined. In this wider sense we may safely say that ■ very large proportion of the workers in this and every other civilised country are sweated. Taking ■ 'bus to catch the last train from one of the London termini ■ few nights ago, I asked the conductor of Metropolitan Stage Carriage No. — whether I might expect the 'bus to keep its time? "Yes," he replied, "this is our last journey, and both the driver and I are anxious to get home." In answer to further enquiries, he went on to say: "I get home about half-past twelve, and if the missus has got anything warm to eat I have a little supper, that is, if I am not too tired to eat it, and then I get to bed, about ■ o'clock. I ■ on the 'bus again at eight o'clock in the morning. Yes! I feel tired now after standing all day, but I feel more tired in the morning; you see, six hours' sleep of ■ night is not enough for a man. Does standing hurt me? Well, I ■ a strong man, except my throat is a bit delicate; but ■ of our ■ get soft leg (varicose veins) through standing, and then they sometimes make them time-keepers; many ■ get paralysis, and that's far worse. I get 35s. for ■ week of ■ days, about 4d. ■ hour. Sundays off? No, indeed! I work twenty-three days



of ■ employed ■ guards, engine-drivers and firemen, and signalmen ■ the railways, and the work done by freightmen and shunters is very trying and dangerous. Though several inventions have been patented for coupling trucks without danger to the men, and ■ for automatic coupling, the companies still prefer to maim and slaughter ■ large number of their employees every year to incurring the expense of altering the arrangement for coupling their trucks. They do not, apparently, ■ consider the matter when ordering new trucks.

It is almost unnecessary to refer to the hard conditions of life and the overwork to the verge of exhaustion for small pay which is the lot of the vast number of men who work our mercantile marine. Continuous work during a voyage is their recognised lot. It is ■ joke among sailors that the fourth commandment is superseded for them by one which runs,

“Six days thou shalt labour  
And do all that thou art able,  
And the seventh thou shalt holystone the decks  
And clean the cable.”

A vivid picture of the life of the firemen on board our splendid ocean steamers is given in the following letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, May 25th, 1896, entitled,

#### “THE MOLOCH OF OCEAN SPEED.

“Sir,—Having just stepped off ■ great liner, and having made some efforts during my passage to find out something of the conditions under which stokers live ■ board these floating palaces, I have been much interested in the paragraph of your issue of April 17th ■ the abnormal number of suicides among men of that class.

“My interest in the subject dates from ■ previous voyage,

furnace-room, beaten back by intolerable heat we ventured from under the air funnel. In front of the row of huge furnaces stood the firemen stripped, almost naked, perspiration streaming down their blackened bodies, ceasing in their work of opening and re-opening the furnace doors to shovel in supplies of coal and keep the fire raked up to a white heat. Under these conditions the men worked four hours on and four off at stoking, but in addition to that had to do their own work which took another hour. This chief engineer thought their hours too long, and the food provided for them very poor, and he did not think it any wonder that once ashore their instinct was to lie still and drink whisky. As a man of heart he pitied them, and said so, but what could he do?

Aboard the far larger liner I have just left, I had considerable talk with a fireman, who was in a state of weakness and exhaustion brought about by the heat and strain. Of the eighty men who stoked this vessel, he believed every one drank himself, not only ashore but afloat, for though against the rules, each smuggled whisky bottles in his satchel.

"No doubt many of these men are of a low type, and no doubt many of them drink. Under the circumstances is this wholly a matter of surprise? No doubt the company like to keep down expenses; the passengers want extra speed, and in the comfort of the saloon they do not realise the suffering of the white-faced, soot-blackened men far down in the burning heart of the ship. But three things at least might be done; the hours of work should be compulsorily shortened, this involves the engagement of more hands; the food provided should be subject to inspection and a standard quality insisted on; while lastly the prohibition of whisky on board should be made a reality."

Mr. Chas. Booth, in the last volume of the "Life and Labour of the People in London," estimates the number of persons employed in the preparation of food and drink in the Metropolis — 138,000, of whom 27,000 are women.

common of cooks working in underground kitchens of restaurants for 14 hours a day for wages of not more than 1s. 6d. a day, or less. The public were startled a short time ago by the charges made in some of the evening newspapers as to the conditions under which waitresses were employed in the shops of Messrs. Lyons and Co., and other refreshment contractors, and, strange to say, a financial paper lately devoted a column a day for two or three days to the sweating of waitresses and barmaids at railway station bars and refreshment rooms. Perhaps, however, the following case at the Shoreditch County Court offers an example of the limits beyond which it is physically impossible to impose long hours and difficult to greatly reduce wages:

"A waitress named Dynes sued a coffee-tavern proprietor for a month's money for work done, and a month instead of notice. Plaintiff said she was employed as waitress, at 12s. a month. On November last the defendant told her to clear out, and did not pay her her wages.—The Judge: Why were you dismissed?—Plaintiff: Because I was not up in time in the morning. I could not be. I got to bed before a quarter to one, and I expected to be up again at half-past four in the morning.—The Judge: What time did you get downstairs?—The Plaintiff: Five o'clock. Mr. Moore (Counsel for the Defendant): Isn't it a fact you went down late?—Plaintiff: At five o'clock.—Judge French: Do you call that late? (Laughter).—Plaintiff: Defendant then told me half-a-dozen times to go, so I went.—Mr. Moore: Did he not go up and tell you to finish your sleep?—The Judge: Was that meant ironically? (Laughter.) Really, Mr. Moore, could any girl of eighteen get up at that time in the morning if she went to bed at a quarter to one, even with a very generous allowance of two hours' rest in the afternoon? (Laughter.) A young girl, and the hours worse than sailors' watches on board a ship, and they are strong and hearty (Applause in

what took place. He gave judgment for her with costs, and allowed her 4s. for her attendance that morning."

Although Shop Assistants are supposed to have "light work," yet the long hours they ■■■ compelled to stand about day after day, the absence of time for exercise, and the short intervals for meals (which ■■■ often far from appetising), together with the overcrowded and ill-ventilated bedrooms in which many of them sleep, and the insanitary condition of many shops, tend to undermine the health even of strong young men, and ■■■ especially fatal to delicate women and girls. If we add to this that the wages are frequently low and made lower by all kinds of vexatious and excessive fines, and that in very many shops there is constant "drive," ■■■ shall agree that the Shop Assistant is only too frequently the victim of sweating. In the "Report of the Committee of the Shop Hours Bill, 1886," we read: "Your Committee being satisfied that the hours of Shop Assistants range in many places ■■■ high ■■■ from eighty-four to eighty-five per week, ■■■ convinced that such long hours must be generally injurious to health, and that the ■■■ amount of business might be compressed into ■ shorter space of time." In consequence of this report the Shop Hours Regulation Act of 1886 was passed limiting the hours of

■■■ under 18 employed in shops to 74 hours per week, ■■■ an average of 12 hours ■■■ minutes per day! It is now the law that if three-fourths of the shop keepers in any district desire to close early one day in the week the municipal authorities are obliged to enforce the closing of all shops in the district. But as the larger towns are divided into districts, instead of being treated ■■■ a whole, the Act has been largely inoperative.

## WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?

The victims of sweating are those who in the fierce struggle for existence which rages among the poorer classes are weaker in some way in a less advantageous position than others. This may arise from various causes, foremost among which we may reckon bodily weakness and ill health, ignorance, want of skill in work, absence of organisation among the workers, and, finally, sex. In short, the sweated will be the physically weak, the unskilled, and the unorganised workers, and women often combine all these qualifications, and is, *par excellence*, the sweated one.

The general want of skill and organisation among female workers renders the competition between them for employment keener than that between men. The female weavers in the Lancashire cotton mills are almost the only women whose labor is as well organised as men's labour, with the result that they receive the same wages as the men. It is, indeed, only recently that any attempt has been made to organise the unskilled female workers, and these attempts have met with but slight success. Another reason for the low wages paid to women is to be found in the fact that married women, partially supported by their husbands, and girls living at home, compete with other women who have to support themselves entirely, and this competition often brings down the wages of the latter almost to starvation point. Again, women are more patient of bad treatment and of long hours of labour, and are more easily frightened by their employers than men, and thus they are the greatest sufferers from the petty tyranny—unreasonable and excessive fines, etc.



### WHAT CAN AN INDIVIDUAL DO?

Everyone who has contemplated the horrors of sweating, and thought of the vast numbers of its victims; who has realised the intensity of the sufferings endured by those forming the base of the industrial pyramid, who is unable to pass a portion of the social pressure to others lower than themselves, but is forced to bear the whole of its crushing weight—must feel troubled by his share of responsibility for these things, and must often have asked himself, “What can I do to remedy these evils?” It is to be feared, indeed, that but little can be done by the direct action of any individual, yet we are each of us bound to do that little. Everyone is to some extent a purchaser of the products of labour, and it has often been argued that much might be done towards the abolition of sweating if each well-to-do person is willing to pay a fair price for a good article, and to deal only with such tradesmen as treated their assistants with consideration. Now with regard to the first of these assertions, whilst it is no doubt true that very “cheap” articles are largely produced by sweated labour, this is not invariably the case, and if it were, it by no means follows that by paying a high price for a good article one can be sure of buying goods which are not the products of sweating, as the following case will show. In a certain West-end shop a lady will be charged three guineas for a well-made blouse of first-class materials costing the dealer 25s. 6d. (18s. for the material and 7s. 6d. for the labour). These blouses are made by seventeen girls employed only during the season. It is said that they come back regularly to the workroom on the first day of the season, having supported themselves



■ these girls—they are ■ over eighteen years of age—earn 15s. a week ■ somewhat less, whilst the remaining ■ is paid 11s.

Some good might, no doubt, be done if the public would boycott restaurants and refreshment rooms where the waitresses ■ notoriously overworked or underpaid, and would patronise only such shopkeepers ■ treat their assistants with ■ degree of consideration. But it is difficult to know who these are. Attempts have been made to draw up a "white list" of the employers who pay their shop people well, and do not overwork them, but little has ■ yet been done. The Christian Social Union have, indeed, drawn up a list of bakers whom they can recommend ■ "dealing fairly with their employees and satisfying the conditions of the sanitary authorities," and of clerical tailors who adhere to the arrangement as to hours and wages agreed upon by the Association of London Master Tailors and the Amalgamated Society of Tailors. They also recommend Lockhart's, the Aerated Bread Company, "Pearce and Plenty," and the British Tea Table Company as coffee-houses in which the wait-  
 ■ ■ never worked for ■ than eleven hours per day, ■ not fined, have opportunities for sitting down, and have other advantages over the waitresses in most refreshment rooms, though the conditions under which they work "leave room for much improvement." The London Society of Compositors (7 and 9, St. Bride Street, E.C.) publishes a list of "Fair Houses." There is room for ■ good deal of useful work in this direction, ■ ■ may hope to ■ ■ accomplished in the ■ future.  
 ■ Co-operative Institute Society, ■ the dépôt for co-operative productions, 19, Southampton Row, Holborn, sell boots and shoes, hosiery, shirts, dress goods ■

china, and do tailoring on their own premises. By purchasing from them one may be sure that one is buying goods which have not been made by sweated labour and that one is aiding the co-operative movement besides.

In investing money, again, one should choose such companies which are said to treat their employees well, and one should then use one's influence as a shareholder to secure this being done. Strikes for better pay and shorter hours, such as those of the dockers and the great strike against sweating in the boot and shoe trade, should be aided by every social reformer. Anyone who employs labour has, of course, greater possibilities of giving direct aid in the abolition of sweating. He should see to it that all in his employment work no longer than the legal hours, are well paid, and work under sanitary conditions. The Bishop of Bedford, when examined before the Sweating Commission, pointed out that if men of business "were content with less returns and attended more directly to the business themselves" they might effect a considerable change. The excuse often given when attention to the sweating of their employees is, he added, "Oh I cannot interfere with that department, that is Mr. Such-and-Such's. Mr. Such-and-Such knows that though he may be told to treat all that are employed fairly, it will go hardly with him at the time of stocktaking if he does not produce a good balance as he had last time. And those who in my judgment very sadly neglect their duty are, many of them, those that we all honour as most philanthropic and charitable people. I would rather that their earnings were a little less, and they had less to give away and so this evil was reduced."

Members of philanthropic and zoophilist societies should

sweated labour for their printing, clerical, and other work. This is frequently done by such societies in order to ~~make~~ money for their special work, and thus sweating is promoted by the very people most anxious to lessen suffering ~~and~~ remove oppression.

It does not appear that ~~any~~ ~~one~~ do much ~~work~~ by *direct* action ~~of~~ individuals. We must look to collective and State action to do the greater part of the work of mitigating and destroying sweating.

#### COLLECTIVE ACTION OF ~~THE~~ WORKERS.

If the isolated action of the individual becomes more insignificant ~~as~~ society grows more complex, the union of individuals becomes increasingly possible, and the power of such union greater. This being the case, many have seen in co-operation of the workers the true remedy for sweating. Much has undoubtedly been done by ~~a~~ portion of the upper section of the working classes to better their condition by co-operation in distribution, and of late years in production also, and the movement seems now to be progressing at ~~an~~ accelerated speed. But the lowest section of the workers, whom it is most imperative to help, ~~are~~ at present beyond the reach of its influence. Ignorant, overworked, underfed, and often working in isolation, it is almost impossible for them to effectively co-operate.

There is ~~some~~ hope in the endeavours which have lately been made to band the unskilled workers together in Trade Unions. Yet many of the ~~unions~~ which have rendered Trade Unionism such ~~a~~ potent force among the skilled workmen are absent in this case. The earnings of the unskilled are so small that great difficulty is

to the Union fund; their numbers are practically unlimited, so that their places are easily filled if they strike, and this fringe of unskilled labour is added to by the very existence of the skilled artisans since their Unions are necessarily confined to good workmen, and the less competent are added to the already swollen ranks of the unemployed or the sweated. Yet in spite of such enormous difficulties something has been gained by union of unskilled labourers. The Union gives additional strength to the worker by the collective bargain with the master; it strengthens the individual in resisting deductions, fines, and other forms of petty tyranny, and it helps to develop a feeling of solidarity among the workers, and to keep their grievances before the public eye. It is to this publicity, and to the growth of a healthy public opinion, that we must look to bring about the adoption of the only remedy which is strong enough, and far reaching enough, to give really effective aid to the sweated class—viz., Legislation for the Protection of Labour.

### ECONOMIC EVOLUTION.

One of the most potent forces which are making for the elimination of sweating is the growing consolidation of capital and the consequent tendency for work to be carried on in large factories; for large shops and warehouses to supersede smaller ones; and for transportation to be under the control of large companies—such as the L. and N. W. Railway (employing an army of 60,000 men) and the P. and O. Steamship Company. The growth of these large concerns favours the abolition of sweating, because it tends to abolish "domestic workshops," the giving of

master, shopkeeper, and dealer who had not the means to carry ■ his business in such ■ way ■ to ■ proper conditions for his employees. In regard to "domestic workshops," Mr. Lakeman said in 1894: "I shall hold to the opinion that these domestic workshops are great evils, for ■ cannot apply the law to them ■ ■ to other workshops; they are occupied by persons of such varied habits, who ■ recipients of a wage from the employer which would not be offered to ■ worker ■ his premises, that wages are kept down, the elevation which one looks for in a London factory worker, both ■ to character and position, is lost, and the factory laws, which ensure regularity, due time for meals, and strict leaving off, so valuable to young persons, are ■ before a domestic worker." It is, of course, quite possible for sweating to go on in ■ large establishment, especially in such trades ■ have not yet been brought under the Factory Acts; but the workers in such places have more opportunities of organising themselves: the business is carried ■ publicly and not in holes and corners, it is much easier to bring the influence of public opinion to bear on the employers, and, finally, the growth of these large concerns renders necessary the extension of the Factory, Sanitary, and Truck Acts, and their more efficient enforcement.

#### LEGISLATION FOR ■ PROTECTION OF LABOUR.

At the end of the last and the beginning of the present century sweating was well nigh universal. The movement for the liberation of the worker from Feudal restrictions and outgrown forms of association had ended in throwing him helplessly into the power of the rapidly growing capitalist class with the result that he became ■ slave in



men, women, and ■■■ little children, who often worked under the most degrading conditions and in the most horrible and insanitary surroundings. "Freedom of contract" was not then interfered with, and *laissez-faire* was the motto of the Government, excepting when the working classes ventured to meet and discuss their almost intolerable wrongs, ■■ to combine to better their condition, when they were mercilessly suppressed. But in 1802 the first timid attempt was made by the State to protect little children from the horrible sufferings of overwork, and from that time onward a series of Acts have been passed for the protection of ■■■ and children, and the regulation of hours of labour in factories and workshops, culminating in Mr. Asquith's Act of last year. By this Act protection has been extended to young persons, and, in some degree, to women working in laundries where sweating had formerly prevailed. Outwork has at last been forbidden for children, and for any women and young persons who are employed both before and after the dinner hour. Registration of workshops has been made compulsory. More stringent regulations have been made ■■ to sanitation, and henceforth 250 cubic feet of space (400 during overtime) must be allowed for each worker, to prevent overcrowding. What is now required is the further extension and development of this legislation, and the enforcement of the Acts by an adequate staff of competent inspectors with power to levy penalties for the infraction of the law. Work taken home by women to be finished at night, after long hours of toil at the workshop ■■ factory, has been one of the most common and most oppressive forms of sweating. The following incident



"In a London workshop a half-dozen girls employed in making certain articles of apparel. They paid on a piece-work scale, and constantly received a considerable quantity of work to take home at night, which they were to bring back finished in the morning. The latest Factory Act has, since the beginning of this year, declared that practice illegal, and the circumstances coming to the knowledge of the Women's Industrial Council, the Factory Inspector communicated with. An inspector called the employer and informed him that the practice was illegal. The employer drew up a statement for signature by each employee, declaring that the work taken home to be done not by herself but by her relatives. The Council again informed the inspector. The inspector visited again, and arrived just the girls were going home at night with work. What the inspector said to the employer on this occasion is of course unknown to the Council, but the practice of carrying home work stopped at once. The girls working now only the legal hours found their wages much diminished, and went to the employer to complain that they could no longer live what they earned. The employer raised their wages in a proportion that to be from 40 to 50 per cent. He also engaged six new workers in order to get the work done which had previously been done at home, and is enlarging his work-place to accommodate them."

#### THE REFORMS MOST URGENTLY NEEDED.

1. The employer should be made responsible for the condition of the places to which he sends his outwork, and should be subject to a penalty if it is found that

still, ■ was suggested to the Labour Commission by Mr. Inskip, the employer should be compelled "to find healthy and convenient workshops for all working at trades ■ are done indoors."

2. The landlord should be held responsible for the condition of any house ■ part of ■ house in which any process of manufacture is carried on. Miss Potter (Mrs. Sidney Webb), in her examination before the Committee on Sweating, said that the landlord should be ■ responsible for giving notice to the Factory Department that such-and-such ■ manufacture is being carried on, and then he becomes liable by that notice to certain penalties, supposing certain sanitary conditions are not carried out." "I would rather make him liable to the penalty," she added, "than have the inspector come down and tell him 'this ought to be put right and that ought to be put right,' because he never does it; but if he is liable to ■ penalty his rent collector takes pretty good ■ that nothing is going on that is wrong." By these means it might be possible to secure that, if out-work continued, it ■ at least performed under tolerable conditions; but they would undoubtedly tend to the abolition both of out-work and of the small workshop, and would hasten the growth of large factories, which could be dealt with in ■ more satisfactory ■

3. The passing of an Eight Hours Bill would do much to render sweating impossible, especially sweating in the wider sense, in the lighter trades, and in the transport industries.

4. But not only should eight hours be the legal working day, but overtime, unless in very exceptional cases, should be abolished. Mr. Lokeman insisted, above all things

mittee: "I would allow no overtime to be worked in the kingdom by any trade if I had my way. If overtime were done away with sudden demands would need ~~more~~ hands and larger factories and machinery;" and in his last report before his retirement he reiterated the ~~same~~ opinion: "As I said to the Lords' Committee, ~~as~~ I repeat here, that overtime is ~~an~~ evil, socially, morally and commercially." It has been objected that in seasonal trades and such trades ~~as~~ millinery and dressmaking, where orders ~~come~~ in suddenly, it would be impossible to prevent working overtime. The answer to this lies in the fact that if overtime were forbidden by law it would apply equally to all engaged in the particular trade, and the result would be that the customers would merely be compelled to give their orders for goods or make their purchases in advance. Inspector Cramp, ~~as~~ the result of his experience, declares: "There is ~~a~~ necessity for this overtime; the ~~trade~~ trade work and the press of orders would be executed just the ~~same~~ if it were illegal, and only mean the employment of ~~more~~ hands." Long hours of regular work and sudden stretches of overtime are found in the same trades, whereas those trades in which only the hours allowed to women by the Factory Acts ~~are~~ worked—such ~~as~~ the textile industries—are free from these rushes. "In 1893, before the Royal Marriage, large orders ~~were~~ received for fabrics in special patterns. The textile trade, which had both to design and weave these, succeeded by dint of organisation in putting these goods ~~on~~ the market within the time required without working an hour extra, while the dressmakers who made up the stuff sent in a special appeal for extension of hours."

5. Shop assistants as well as operatives would benefit by the amendment and enforcement of the Truck Act, rendering all fines, other than those of a strictly disciplinary nature, entirely illegal and subjecting the master who should impose such fines to a penalty.

6. The Employers Liability Act should be made more stringent, and no contracting out allowed under any pretence whatever.

7. The Factory Acts should be amended so that their provisions should apply to men, as well as to women and young persons, and the protection which they afford to the operative should be extended to other workers.

8. The Acts for the protection of labour should be consolidated into one Act, and all previous Acts repealed; and, above all, the enforcement of the Acts should be made really effective. "In England," said Victor Hugo, "they venerate so many laws that they never repeal any. They exempt themselves from the consequences of their veneration by never putting any of them into execution." The history of the Factory Acts goes far to justify the gibe of the great Frenchman. Though the first Factory Act was passed in 1802, no effort was made to enforce either it or the three following Acts. It was not till 1833 that any serious attempt was made to enforce the law. The inspectors were, however, few in number and so hampered in their action that the law remained largely inoperative. When Mr. Arnold White was asked by the Lords' Committee in 1890 for his opinion upon the administration of the Factory Act, he replied: "I think it is a farce." "Your opinion is that the staff is too small?" he was asked. "I think it is so small as to be a travesty," he answered; "that is to say,

and ■■■ Act of Parliament ■■ substantially ■ dead letter." At that time forty-eight inspectors, with ■■ or two juniors, had to look after all the factories and workshops in the United Kingdom. The district of Mr. Lakeman, that most conscientious and hard-working of inspectors—the Central Metropolitan—included the whole of central London east of Farringdon Road, and extended to Hertford! In the inspection of this vast district, containing nearly 6,000 factories and workshops, he had the help of Mr. Birtwistle, of the West Metropolitan District, and ■■ so overworked that he told the Committee that he never got through his work till 12 o'clock at night, and had "no amusement or recreation in his life." In fact, sweating was so much a matter of course that the Government even sweated those whom they charged with its prevention.

The three Metropolitan districts, which included the major part of the Home Counties, ■■ well ■■ the Metropolis, and in which there were 6,479 factories and 12,698 workshops, were supposed to be looked after by six inspectors; five inspectors struggled with the difficulties of "inspecting" the 6,518 factories and the 6,166 workshops scattered over the whole of Scotland, whilst neglected Ireland was divided into two districts, ■■ of which—the Dublin district—including all Ireland, excepting Antrim, Londonderry, and part of North Donegal, and containing ■■■■ than 5,000 factories and workshops, was intrusted to one inspector! Later on the workshops in the County of London, numbering 12,520, ■■■■ separated from the factories, and ■■■■ placed under Mr. Lakeman's supervision, aided by ■ staff of assistants.



"Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories for 1895"—just issued—that the total staff for the whole of the United Kingdom consists of one chief and six superintendent inspectors, forty-four inspectors (aided by sixteen juniors and twenty-five assistants), and the four peripatetic ladies appointed by Mr. Asquith, who have worked very hard trying to protect the women workers all over the country. A backward step seems to have been taken ■ the retirement of Mr. Lakeman, for the registered workshops in the Metropolis which had been placed under his ■■■ are now distributed among the four Metropolitan districts. These four districts comprise the whole of the county of London, together with the counties of Middlesex, Kent, Surrey, and Sussex, the larger part of Essex, Hertford, and Buckingham, and portions of Berks ■ Oxford. In this large area there are 10,664 factories and 18,320 registered workshops, looked after by six inspectors and four juniors, aided by ten assistants! It is evident that with the best will in the world it is impossible for these men to properly inspect all these registered places of work, to say nothing of the time and labour involved in seeing that work is not illegally carried on in workshops which escape registration, and that in the vast numbers of "domestic workshops" young persons are not worked beyond the time allowed by the Act.

Another great evil is the division of responsibility between the factory inspectors and the sanitary authorities. In very many ■■■ the inspector possesses no direct power of enforcing proper sanitation, but has to inform the local sanitary officers of the case, who, as Mr. Hart ■■ Norwich reports, "dare not, in many cases, be too energetic where shops, warehouses ■■ factories belong to,



and by whom they are appointed." Very often these officers are quite ignorant of the sanitary provisions of the Factory Acts. We learn from the inspector at Walsall that "after the usual notices have been sent to the Medical Officer of Health, and to the clerk of the Local Sanitary Authority, they are in some cases sent back with the request to be informed why such notices are sent to them, and under what Act power is given to them to act in cases of contravention."

In fact, great confusion results from the over-lapping of the Factory, Public Health, Truck, and Employers' Liability Acts, and through each new Act being merely an Act to "amend and extend" previous Acts, which have to be referred to. Mr. Knyvett, an inspector, speaking of the new Act, says it "is full of great possibilities, which I am sure I am not alone among my colleagues in hoping will be welded into shape by a Codifying Act. And realising the importance of and the widespread good resulting from the tempered Socialism of English legislation, I am convinced that the sooner the welding of the four Acts takes place the better it will be for the manufacturers, artisans, and lastly, for that most puzzled body, Her Majesty's inspectors."

In this Report the lady inspectors insist on the necessity of altering the Truck Act as to make it really what it professes to be. Women workers are great sufferers by all kinds of arbitrary fines and deductions from their wages. Examples are given of deductions from working women's wages such as the following: "4d. per week for 'room' (i.e., cleaning); 2½d. a reel for thread; 1d. per needle; ½d. in the shilling earned for power; and 3d. per week for the gas used in the gas

are made to her about these matters, and says: "What is further required, ■ fines are to be admitted at all ■ anything but ■ violation of the principles of the Truck Act, ■ (1) publicity in the system of levying them; (2) strict limitation of their amount; (3) that subordinate officials shall have no power to levy them or determine their amount." She also points out that the exclusion of the smallest laundries from the Act is ■ great evil, and will lead to the multiplication of domestic laundries and of those in which not more than two persons are employed, and to excessive toil in these. Only such shop assistants and laundry workers ■ are under eighteen are protected by the Act from excessively long hours, and a number of complaints are made in the Report of girls employed in workrooms attached to shops being brought into the shop to serve customers after the workrooms are closed.

In spite of these and numberless other defects in our factory legislation, one is glad to find ■ tone of hopefulness running through the Report, and to learn that notwithstanding the inadequate number of the inspectors, and the difficulties they have to contend with in enforcing the Act, they have secured 3,038 convictions for infractions of the law in 1895.

Though the difficulties attending the efficient inspection of the vast numbers of factories and workshops scattered about the country are very great, and ■ largely increased staff of inspectors would have hard work in coping with them, even if their work ■ lightened by the codification of the Acts for the protection of labour; yet it should never be forgotten that the largest employer of labour in the country is the Government itself. Here it would be easy to effect such changes as would greatly benefit the

of any kind. Sanitary conditions for the workers, eight hours for all employees, a living wage, abolition of overtime and of out-work, should be enforced and an example afforded, and a standard fixed for the whole country. This would be especially useful in raising the tone of the municipalities, which are also large employers of labour. In such wise, as one branch of industry after another passed under the control of the municipal bodies of the central government, sweating would disappear, and the work would be carried on in a manner consonant with justice and social well-being.

#### THE ULTIMATE CAUSES OF SWEATING.

Sweating is a disease of the body politic, arising from arrested development, both economical and moral. The sub-division of labour and the introduction of machinery moved by steam power have given us the great factory, with its cleanliness and thorough organisation of labour. In these factories adequate inspection and efficient public control are possible. The ever-increasing concentration of capital and organisation of labour is fast preparing the way for the municipalisation and nationalisation of industry generally.

Though sweating—in the wider sense—may still exist to a greater or less extent in the large factory establishment, yet the trades in which it is rampant are, as has been pointed out, those which have not shared to any considerable degree in the economic development of the century but have remained in the undeveloped condition of earlier times. The really efficient economic remedy for sweating is to hasten the evolution of these backward industries and their organisation under public

But sweating is also due to the imperfect moral development of the people. In the purely animal condition the struggle for life has full sway, and the weakest does not fail to go to the wall and to be effectually crushed out. From this condition we are moving upwards towards a human life in which justice shall prevail; in which we shall recognise the Brotherhood of Man, and competition and anarchy be replaced by rational organisation and co-operation. We have reached a stage where the sense of a common good is still but weak, and the control of the individual by the Whole, which is necessary for its realisation, prevails only in a few departments of social life. By our laws we guarantee to the few a share in the material inheritance of the nation, which has been slowly gained for us through the ages by social co-operation, whilst the mass of the people are obliged to obtain leave from these favoured few to work that they may earn a more or less precarious and insufficient livelihood. If any of them have been allowed access to the spiritual inheritance of the race—to the stores of knowledge painfully acquired in the course of centuries—they have a great advantage in the struggle. Of such are the professional and trading classes and the skilled workers. Below them lie the completely disinherited, condemned to strive for the crumbs which fall from the tables of the classes above them, and even these they can only get by long hours of monotonous and exhausting toil. The misery and suffering endured by this class, and especially by the women, is indeed simply appalling. Did not use and wont, and the feeling of the powerlessness of the individual to alter the working of the great economic machine, in which each of us is but a mere wheel or cog of a wheel, make us despair, it would be impossible for such of us as have any knowledge of the

facts and any human feeling to endure these things longer. As it is, the thought that many of the necessities and comforts of our life ■■■ bought at the expense of the very heart's-blood of our fellow creatures embitters ■■■ exist- ■■■ and poisons all our joy.

It is not possible for the most callous wholly to ignore the solidarity of mankind, and the very growth in sensibility and refinement of feeling which is the highest gift of civilisation renders ■■■ more susceptible to the sufferings of others and more capable of sympathy with their wretchedness and woe. This sympathy, indeed, is ever extending and deepening in intensity, yet it is at present but slightly developed, and its action is for the most part occasional, spasmodic, and not seldom irrational. We erect vast hospitals and spend large sums of money yearly for their support. In these the poorest may have good nursing and the best treatment which medical science can furnish. The most wretched victim of sweating, if knocked down, or stricken by illness, can be taken to one of these hospitals and be treated ■■■ human being and skilfully nursed. Should he recover, however, he is again thrust forth into the abyss of destitution to continue his desperate struggle, and society troubles itself no further about him till he ■■■ more becomes ill or commits some crime.

Surely this is irrational! Let ■■■ have, we are tempted to exclaim, either the pitiless struggle of the animal world—which, just because it is pitiless and thoroughgoing, leads to the survival of young, vigorous, and therefore happy life—or such an organisation of society that the struggle of man against man may be replaced by co-operation, and the pitiless extermination of the weaker by loving care, aided by the rational use of those means which would



For the full solution of the problem of sweating, ■ of all the other problems of social life, we must look forward to the growth of sympathy, guided by reason, which shall not merely shudder at tales of injustice and suffering, but shall vigorously work to discover their causes, and, having discovered these, shall intelligently organise the whole of life in accordance with Insight and Love.

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